

Emb
A^c

ABSTRACT CONFERENCE FACILITY

A telecommunications videoconferencing facility represents other users on a user's
5 display device 21 by means of graphical representations (avatars) 2,3,4
corresponding to the respective users. The virtual environment can be arranged
differently for each user, e.g. the relative positions of the avatars and other
elements (e.g. whiteboard facility 32) of the environment can be different for ease
of viewing. The avatars carry out symbolic actions, relating to the various events
10 taking place during the virtual telecommunications conferencing process, under the
control of simple commands which cause their avatars to move in complex ways,
without the need for the user to perform a complex navigational task around the
virtual environment. For example, a user 2 wishing to use the whiteboard facility
32 can access it using a "mouse" or keyboard operation, which will cause the
15 avatar representing the user 2 to move to the whiteboard 32 in the virtual
environments of the other users 1, 3, 4. The act of copying a document 33 may
be represented by the movement of a representation 33a of such a copy across
the table 31.

20

Figure 8